At the Bottom of the Stairway to Adulthood
by Amagakure Gido
I don't like my big sister much. Or her friends.

YES, MA'AAA-AAAAM.
Why should I have to?
NATSU!
BRING US OOLONG TEA, AND CUPS, GOT IT?
Keep moving, keep moving! I need to get off my feet
Coming through
They put on adult airs and make a lot of showy noise... it's a little intimidating
slip
haven't seen her before
smile

Amagakure Gido

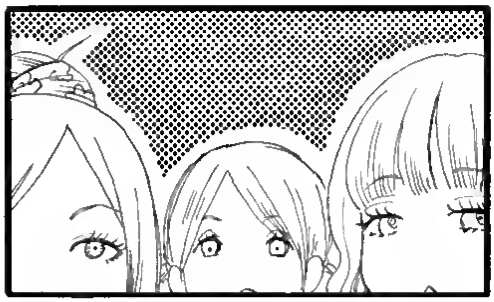
雨隠ギド

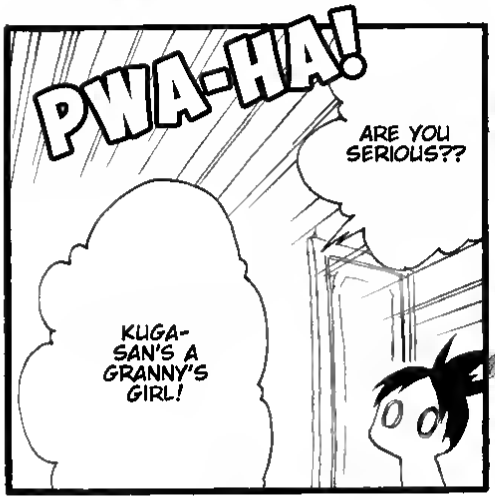
At the Bottom of the Stairway to Adulthood

大人の階段の下

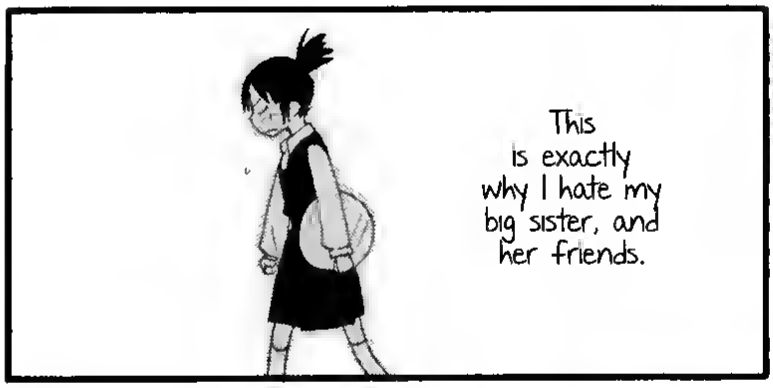
THIS CREAM HERE... I DIDN'T LIKE THE SMELL AT ALL.
EH? I LOVE THIS! IF YOU TAKE THE LITTLE BIT LEFT IN YOUR HAND, AND THEN RUB IT IN YOUR HAIR...
Ahaha.
STOP SAYING "PINK"!
THIS PINK, YOU KNOW... DO WE REALLY NEED TO GO ALL PINK THIS, PINK THAT?
HOW WAS THAT ONE THERE?
This is just the cutest, aint it!
Once a week, my sister and her friends
divvy up purchasing duties, and try out a bunch of different cosmetics or whatever.
...GOT YOUR TEA HERE.
YEP, THANK YOU.

She really seems out of place...
...PARDON ME—
SAY, KUGA-SAN,
YOUR HAIR SURE IS PRETTY, HUH?
How did she get such straight and silky hair...!
I was wondering the exact same thing!!
cling
WHAT DO YOU USE FOR IT?
JOLT
WELL, YOU SEE...



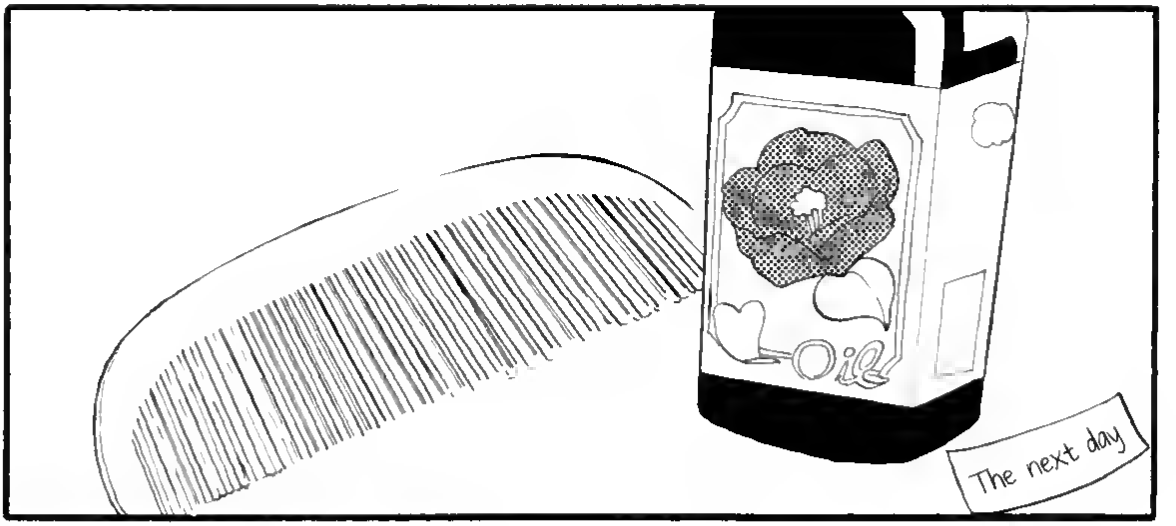

PWA-HA!
ARE YOU SERIOUS??
KUGA-SAN'S A GRANNY'S GIRL!

I LEARNED IT FROM MY GRAND-MOTHER!
I USE TEA-SEED OIL WITH A BOXWOOD COMB!

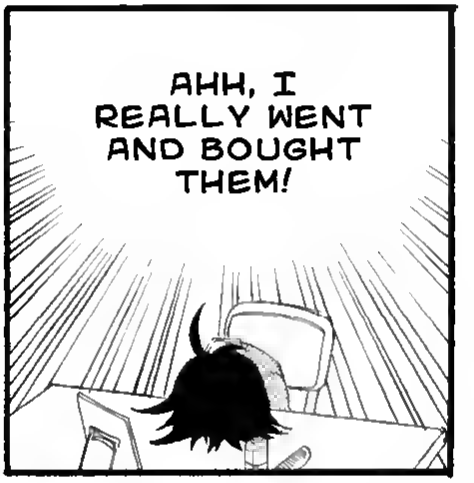

This is exactly why I hate my big sister, and her friends.

THAT BOTTLE THEY SELL THAT STUFF IN, IT JUST LOOKS KINDA...
Ah ha ha ha
I KNOW! CAN'T THEY USE SOMETHING A LITTLE CUTER?
Wh.
What the heck are you laughing for!!

I wonder what kind of face Kuga-san is making right now...


Oil
The next day

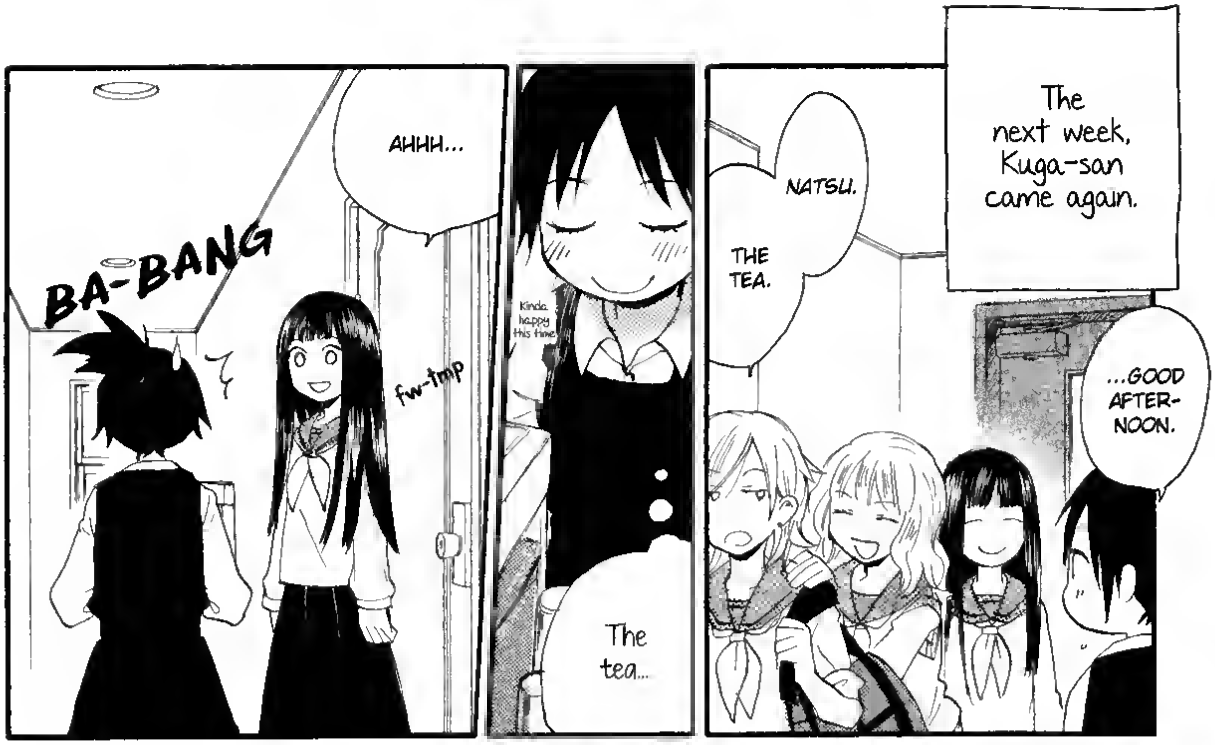
rub
rub
fwsh
fwsh
Just the right amount...
spread it on your hands...

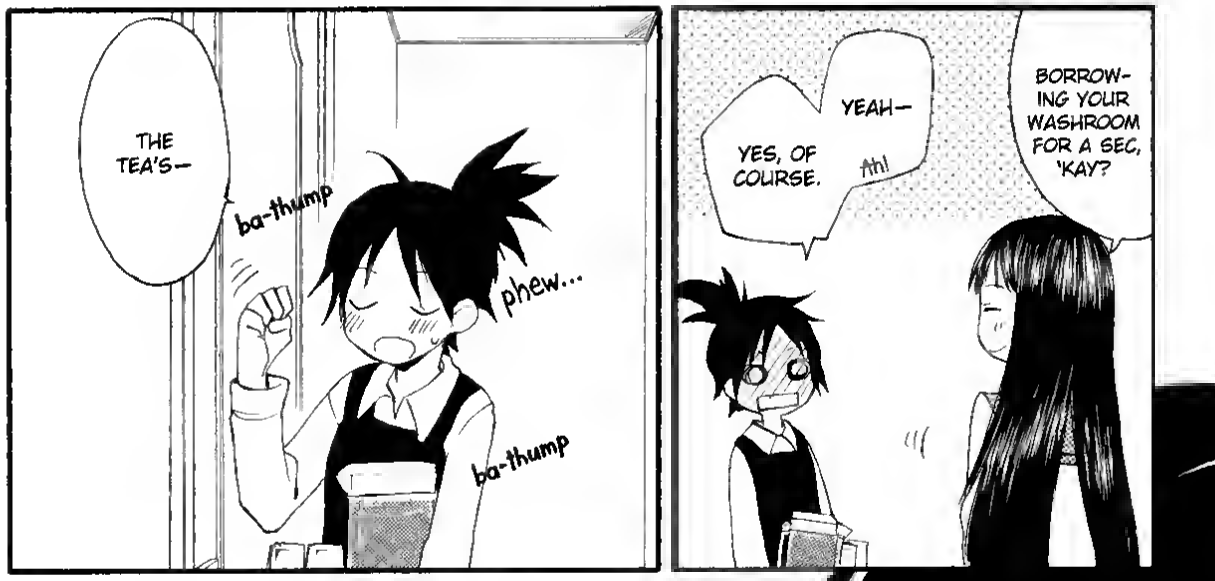

AHH, I REALLY WENT AND BOUGHT THEM!

I GET THE FEELING THAT THIS IS HOPE-LESS...
raggedy...
REALLY, TOTALLY, HOPELESS...!!

YANK
Then, with the comb...

NRRGGGHHHH


AHHH...
BA-BANG
fw-tmp
Kinda happy this time
The tea...
The next week, Kuga-san came again.
NATSU.
THE TEA.
...GOOD AFTER-NOON.


THE TEA'S—
ba-thump
phew...
ba-thump
YEAH—
YES, OF COURSE.
thl
BORROW-ING YOUR WASHROOM FOR A SEC, 'KAY?

YOU KNOW, AKI,
I REALLY DIDN'T THINK YOU WOULD INVITE KUGA-SAN AGAIN.

...SHE JUST TRANSFERRED. DON'T YOU FEEL SORRY FOR HER?
YOU'RE SO NICE, AKI...
JUST HANGING AROUND IS ONE THING, BUT DO WE REALLY NEED HER IN THE COSMETICS CLUB?
SHE REALLY DOESN'T SEEM INTERESTED.
BA-BANG
OH?
WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE...
Please come with me for a second!
PULL
fw-tmp
HMM?
WHAT IS IT?
UMM, YOU SEE...
UH...
Ah!

*from spying
Th-
That's-!
Ummm
ONEE...
AKI-NEE TOLD ME ABOUT IT...
BUT HOW DID YOU KNOW I USED THIS?
I SEE. YOU WOULDN'T KNOW IF YOU'VE NEVER TRIED, HUH?
I SEE!
FOR TEA-SEED OIL, YOU JUST WANT TO LIGHTLY WORK IT IN AT THE ENDS OF YOUR HAIR...
tug
AND IN THE SAME WAY, GENTLY COMB IT OUT FROM THE TIPS.

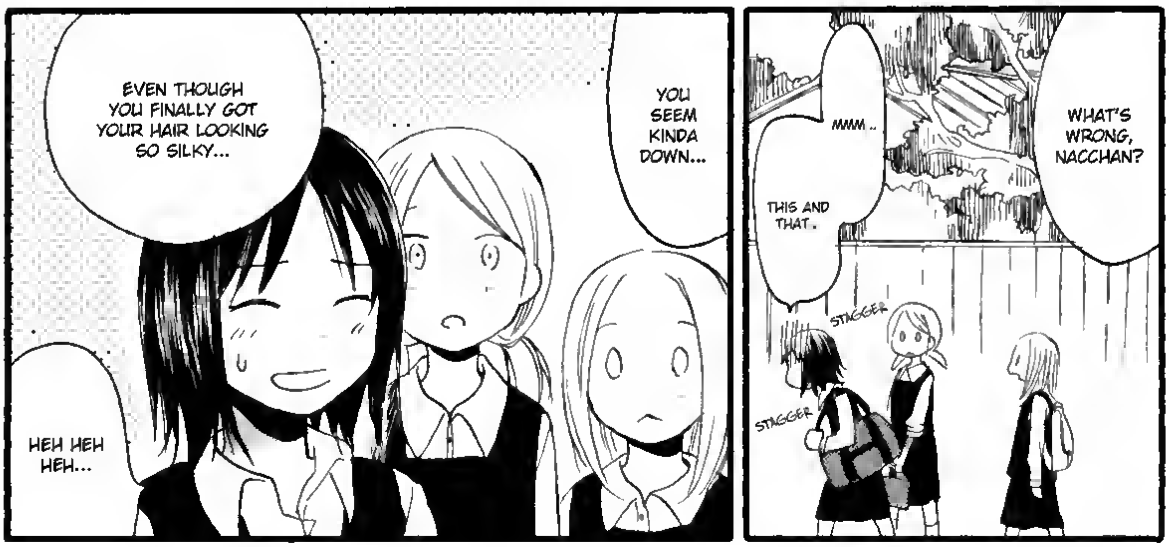
IF YOU DO IT ALL AT ONCE, RIGHT FROM THE TOP, YOU'LL GET THE HAIR TANGLED AND SPOIL THE EFFECT.
I SEE...
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
OK! ALL DONE!
SWSH
...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
APPLY IT NICE AND CAREFULLY, EVERY DAY, OKAY?
IT'S ALL STRAIGHT AND GLOSSY...
WOWWWW
KA-CHIK
Th-
THANK YOU...

YOU CAN FORGET ABOUT THE TEA.
STAY OUT OF MY ROOM.
IT SEEMED AN AWFULLY LONG BATHROOM TRIP...
Ah
SORRY, SORRY.
BYE-BYE, THEN.
AH...
fw-tmp
For as long as I can remember
KUGA-SAN!
THAT WOMAN AND HER FRIENDS WERE JUST TALKING ABOUT YOU LIKE SOME KIND OF NUISANCE!!!
rgggghhhhh

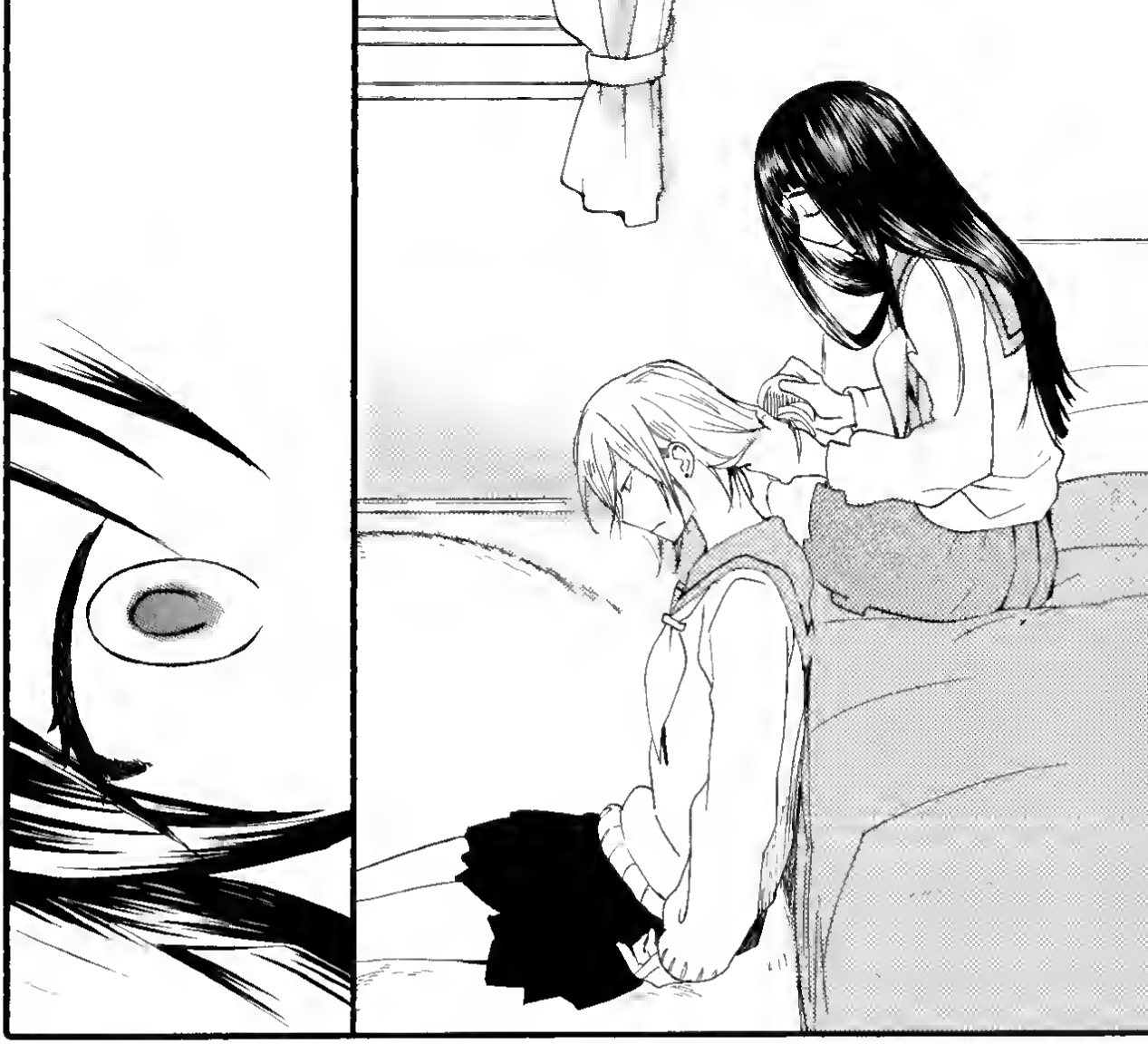
Kuga-san
should just be my friend instead
The last piece of karaage!
Onee-chan and I haven't gotten along.
Agh!
munch
I want the blue bear too!
Shaddap!
A-Are you sure??
It looks great!
AND THEN WE COULD...
grinin

After that, every day,
faithfully following what she had taught me, I gently combed out my hair
Eeeek!
It's not like that
I said it's not like thattttt
writhe writhe
Ah! isn't that pretty much a date!?
BLUSH

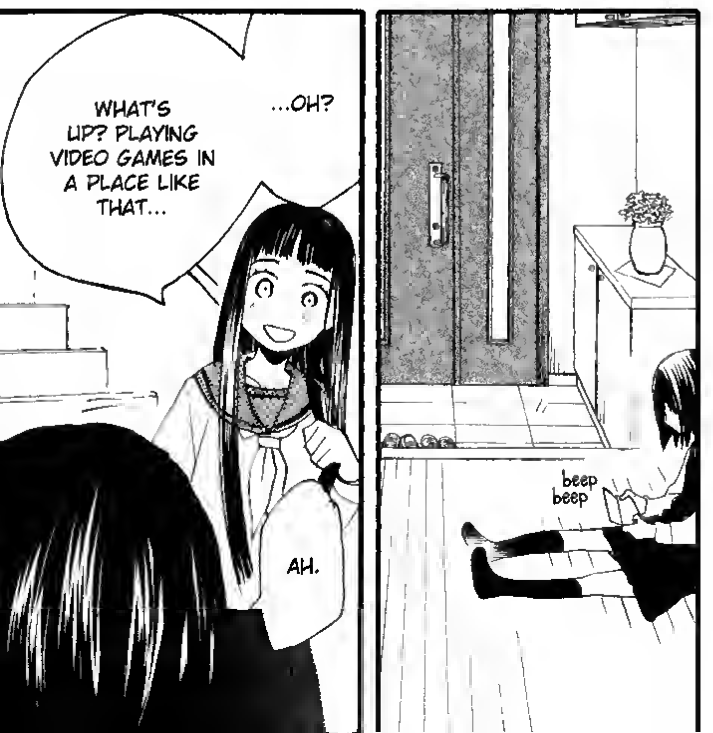
Onee-chan were to stop inviting her.. she'd never come to the house again!?
...if by some chance,
But wait..


EVEN THOUGH YOU FINALLY GOT YOUR HAIR LOOKING SO SILKY...
HEH HEH HEH...
YOU SEEM KINDA DOWN...
MMM..
THIS AND THAT.
WHAT'S WRONG, NACCHAN?
STAGGER
STAGGER

thump
I'M H...
I really should have just come straight out and said, "Please be friends with me"
An extra pair of shoes... a visitor...
sliiiide
t-tp
be Kuga-san?
Crawling up
Could it by any chance...

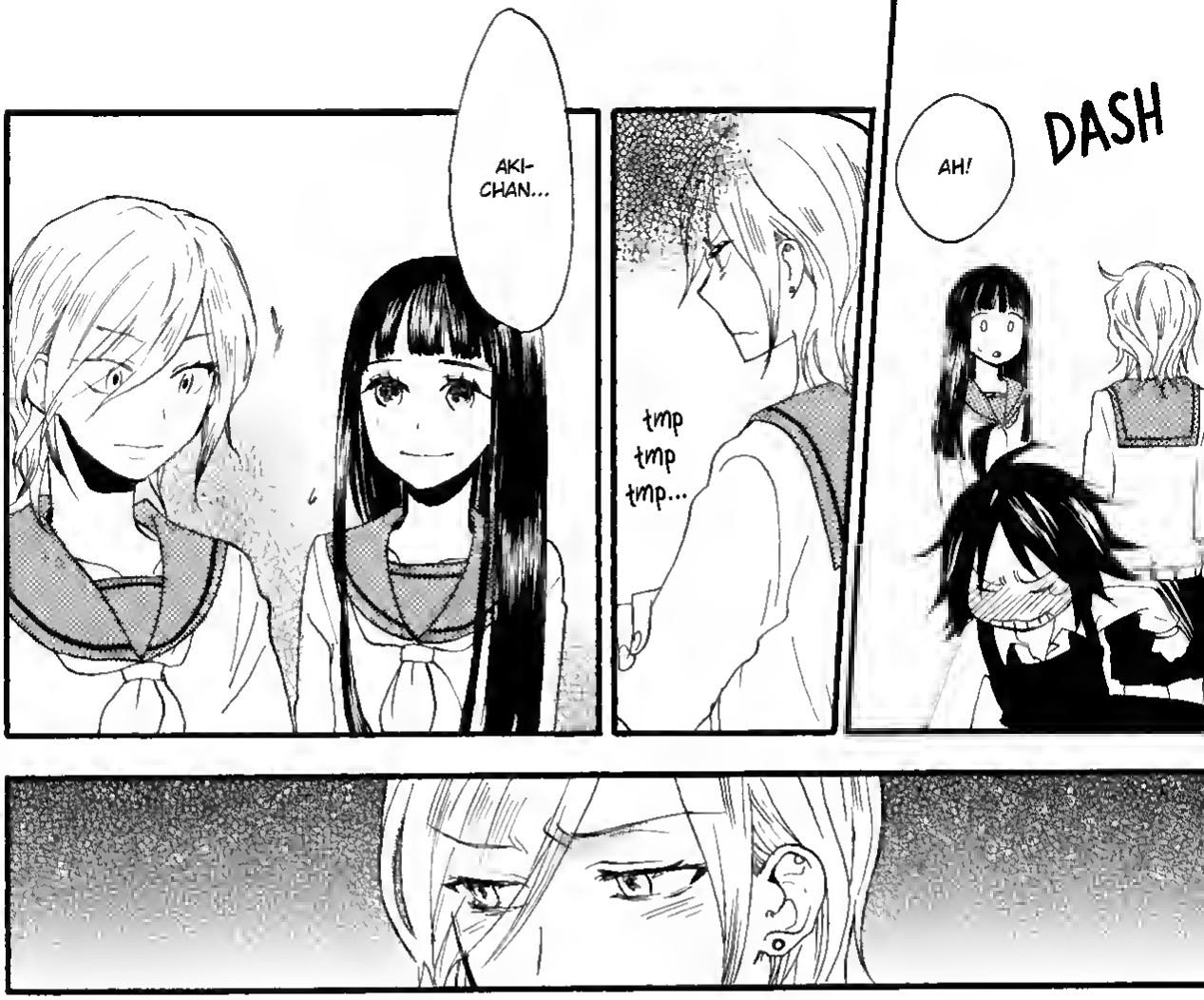


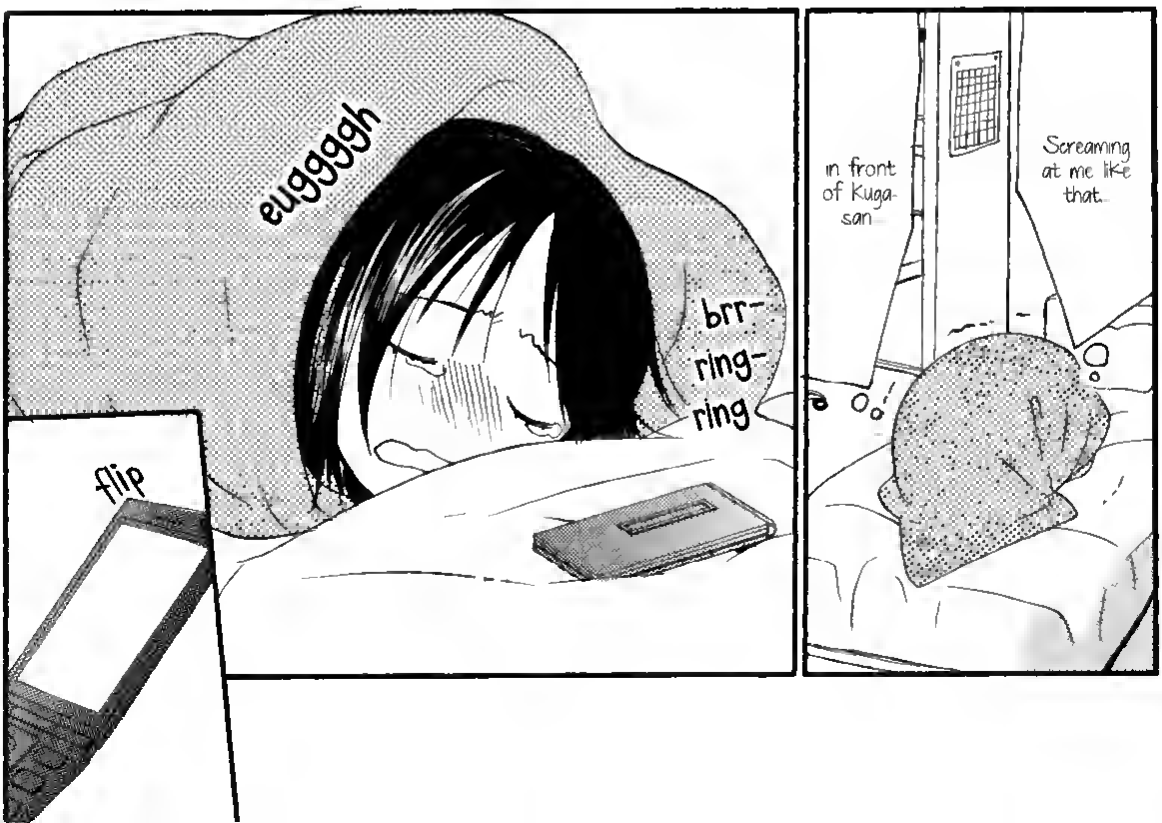
Onee-chan has

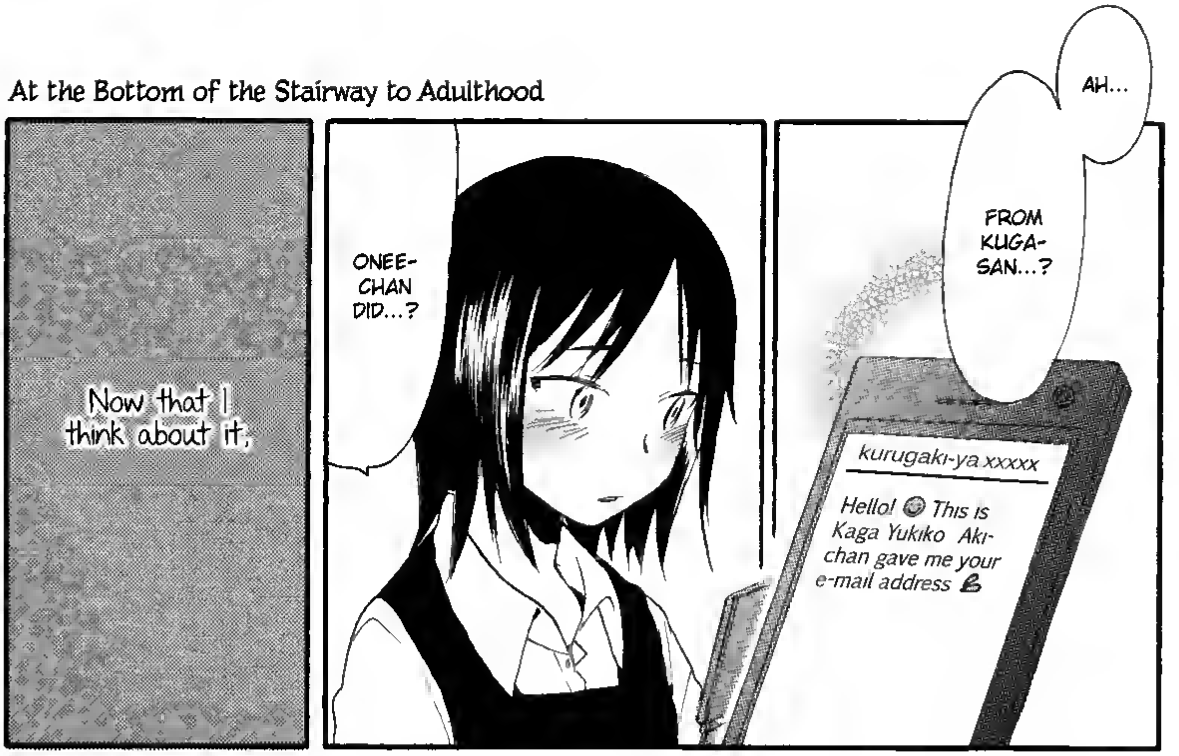


UM, KUGA-SAN,
PLEASE, BE FRIENDS WITH ME!
My!
AND, UM, COULD YOU PLEASE TELL ME YOUR E-MAIL ADDR—
JOLT
NATSU!

ONEE-CHA...
YUKIKO IS MY FRIEND!
NOT YOURS!
DON'T GET COCKY, LITTLE SISTER! QUIT STICKING YOUR NOSE WHERE IT ISN'T WANTED!
WELL UP
OOGH...

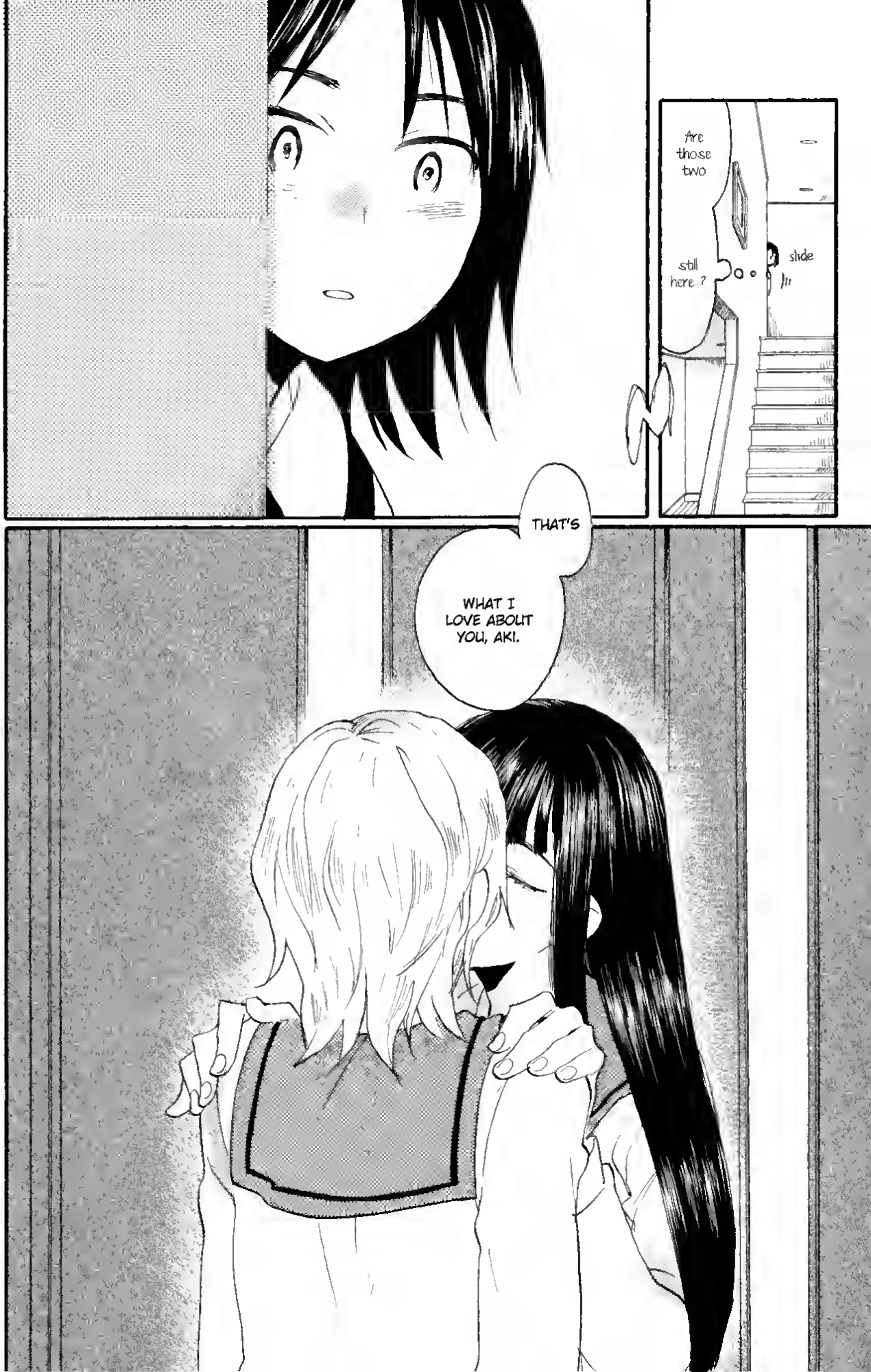

AKI-CHAN...
tmp tmp tmp...
AH!
DASH

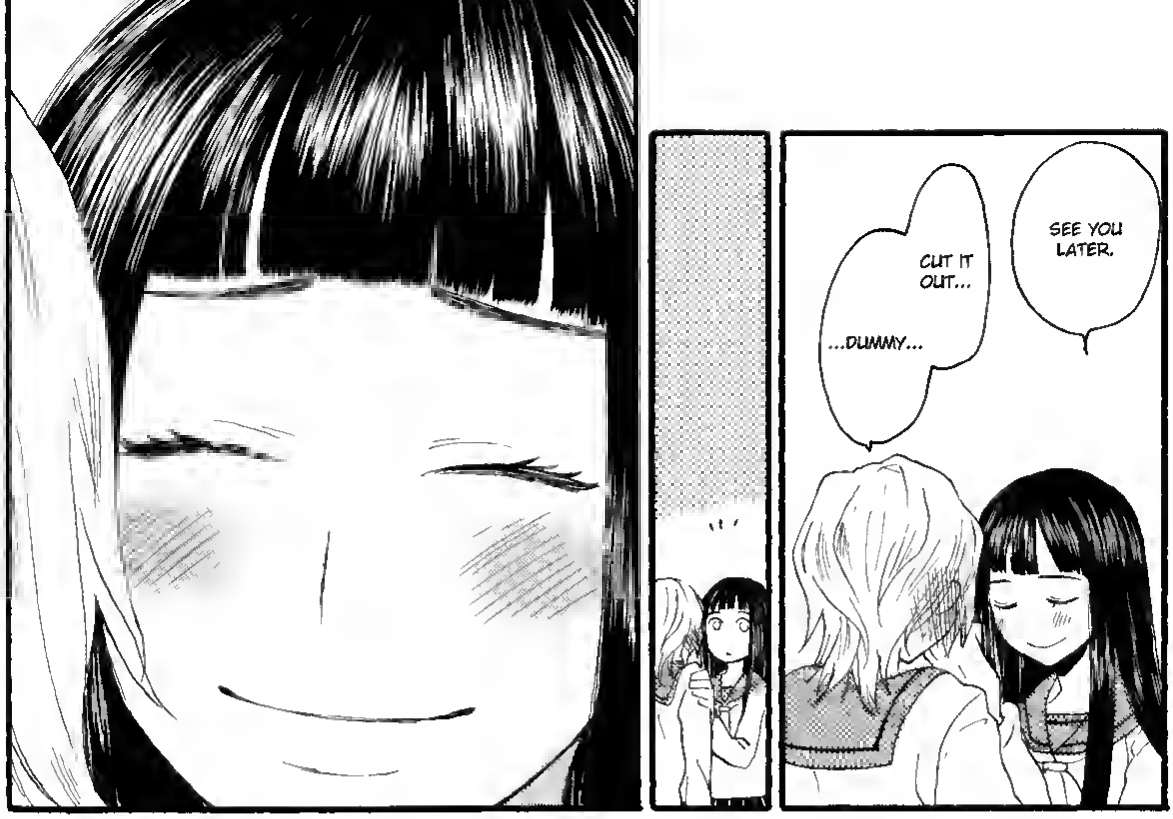

eugggh
brr- ring- ring
flip
In front of Kuga-san...
Screaming at me like that...


Now that I think about it,
ONEE-CHAN DID...?
AH...
FROM KUGA-SAN...?
kurugaki-ya xxxxx
Hello! This is Kaga Yukiko Aki-chan gave me your e-mail address

shared a little bit with me...
Karaage!
I don't want to get Fat.
Here, we'll split it in half.
In the end, Onee-chan always

It's all hot at night and stuff, anyway...
You're still a baby, so you probably want to cling on to it while you sleep, right?


Are those two still here?
slide
THAT'S WHAT I LOVE ABOUT YOU, AKI.



That night, I got a text message from Kuga-san:

"Sorry for stealing your big sister away from you."

Now I'm home from school, sick. Something like a baby's "teething fever," I guess?
Onee-chan has been acting just a bit kinder.
If you don't eat, you can't take the medicine
I wonder, by catching a fever like this, can I get a little closer to becoming an adult?
End

At the Bottom of the Stairway to Adulthood

by Amagakure Gido

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NOTE: IN THE AUTHORS' COMMENTS SECTION AT THE END OF HIRARI 10, AMAGAKURE SAYS THAT NATSU IS AROUND 13 AND AKI AROUND 17.